

# AMERICAN EMBRYO TRANSFER ASSOCIATION



## CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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## CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

### PREAMBLE

The American Embryo Transfer Association (AETA), representing organizations engaged in the commercial practice of embryo transfer, recognizes its responsibility and obligation to establish performance standards for the embryo transfer industry in order to enhance the public image of the industry and to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all records pertaining to the parentage of resulting offspring.

### I. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- A. Embryo Transfer Business (ETB)**—An individual or a business entity that for valuable consideration collects, processes, freezes, stores, thaws, transfers, and/or distributes embryos or oocytes.
- B. Oocyte or Ovum**—The female gamete prior to fertilization.
- C. Embryo**—A fertilized ovum that has developed to the two cell stage and has not completed organogenesis.
- D. Divided Embryo**—An embryo that has been separated in vitro into two or more groups of cells.
- E. Practitioner**—An individual who collects embryos from donors, processes the embryos, and/or transfers embryos into recipients.
- F. Donor**—A female from which an embryo or oocyte is collected.
- G. Superovulation**—The release of two or more oocytes from the ovaries of a monotocous female that was treated with hormones.
- H. Breeder**—The person or firm that is the owner of record, on the records of the respective breed association, of a donor at the time the donor is bred for embryo collection. Such person or firm will be identified as the “breeder” of the animal resulting from the transferred embryo.
- I. First Owner**—The person that owns the offspring resulting from a transferred embryo when such offspring is born.
- J. Recipient**—A female into which an embryo is transferred and that is the host to the developing embryo and subsequent fetus during gestation.
- K. Breed Registry Organization**—A breed association that maintains a herd book for recording genealogical records. Certificates of registration or certificates of identification are issued for animals that meet its respective requirements.
- L. Certified Embryo Transfer Business**—An embryo transfer business that has met each of the requirements set forth in the Certification Program Guidelines and has in effect a current Operating Agreement with the AETA.
- M. Certification Program Guidelines**—This document, which provides information and requirements of the certification program of the AETA.

### II. REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

- A.** To be eligible for certification, an ETB must employ at each business site location at least one practitioner who holds either (1) a doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) or other equivalent veterinary degree with a license to practice within the United States of America or (2) a PhD with emphasis in reproductive physiology where the applicant’s college transcript and dissertation have been reviewed and determined to be acceptable by the board of directors of

the AETA.

- B. An ETB must be in business for a minimum of 12 months from the first documented embryo transfer to make application for certification.
- C. The qualified individual(s) taking the examination must have performed a minimum of 50 embryo recoveries of superovulated females and handled 250 embryos of which at least 100 were transferred to recipient females and at least 100 were frozen within the last 12 months.
- D. The application must be postmarked no later than 21 days prior to the Professional Competence Examination.
- E. The ETB must have necessary equipment available and the knowledge to freeze and thaw embryos.
- F. The ETB must pay an application fee, as outlined on the application, for each separate business site where the embryo transfer company operates.

### **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION**

#### **A. Demonstrated Professional Competence—Examination**

To become certified, an ETB must employ a person, at each of its business locations and each collection and processing site, who has passed the AETA competency examination. Only persons satisfying the educational requirements of Section II, Part A, are entitled to take the examination. If the ETB has other qualified individuals who independently perform and/or supervise embryo collection and/or processing of embryos, then they also must take and pass the Certification Examination, at the fee designated on the application form. The examination may consist of two parts: a written and/or oral examination. Applications for certification must be postmarked no later than 21 days prior to the examination. The application fee is nonrefundable and will cover the initial examination and one retake if necessary.

The examination will cover the following subjects: (1) forms and labeling; (2) recovery and handling; (3) reproductive physiology, superovulation, and breeding; (4) transfer and recipient management; (5) cryopreservation; (6) embryo evaluation; and (7) practicum. The AETA competency examination will be offered on a regular basis each fall during the AETA annual meeting and at the same time as the winter board of directors meeting. An ETB applicant must obtain a 75% grade on all examination sections.

#### **B. Renewal Procedures**

1. In lieu of being retested every third year, qualified individuals who have successfully passed the AETA Certification Examination as of January 1, 1995, are required to obtain 30 approved certification credits over the next three-year period.
2. Certification credits can be obtained from
  - a. American Embryo Transfer Association meetings,
  - b. Canadian Embryo Transfer Association meetings,
  - c. International Embryo Transfer Society meetings,
  - d. Special advanced embryo transfer seminars conducted by the AABP, or
  - e. Other board-preapproved meetings, e.g., Society for Theriogeneology, etc.
3. Ten certification credits are allowed for each AETA, Canadian ETA, or IETS meeting, and five approved credits for the other meetings listed.
  - a. Certification and continuing education is on a calendar-year basis. For example, your three-year cycle started in 2007. That would be January 1, 2007. Therefore, the three-year cycle would consider all events that occurred in calendar years 2007, 2008, 2009; events being CE, certification exam, and statistical surveys. In almost every year, the AETA meeting will be the last available meeting for CE that would count toward certification, so the renewal process can be initiated after the annual

meeting; anything else will be a special consideration.

4. Of the 30 required units, 20 must come from AETA meetings.
5. There are no rollover provisions for excessive hours over 30 hours during the three-year period.
6. If a qualified individual who has successfully passed the initial examination is short of his or her 30 hours at the end of a three-year period, he or she will be required to retake the examination in January of that year immediately following the three-year renewal period.
7. At each yearly AETA meeting, beginning in 1995, a special session will be set aside to update current certified company representatives as to the latest developments within the industry. Each qualified individual for a specific certified ETB will be required to be in attendance at two of the three special sessions and take a short graded examination over the pertinent information.
8. Qualified individuals of certified ETBs will be required to furnish the AETA office documentation that they in fact attended approved meetings, other than the AETA meeting, during a given year. These documentations along with the attendance at the required two AETA meetings will be kept in each certified company's file, and the number of credits those individuals have obtained will be calculated each year. At the beginning of the third year during the renewal period, each certified company will be advised as to where the qualified individuals of their company stand as far as total credits earned and total credits needed for the company to maintain its certification at the end of the three-year period.
9. The Certification Committee will be responsible for the development and preparation of the update special sessions for certified companies at each of the AETA annual meetings.

#### **C. Facilities**

1. The ETB must establish and maintain its facilities in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations and must submit to inspection by the person designated by the AETA as the chief administrative officer (CAO) of the certification program.

#### **D. Recordkeeping**

1. A written record of insemination for each embryo collection must be maintained. This record will include the registration name and registration number of the male whose semen was used. The ETB will use the written record of insemination when completing forms as required by the AETA and breed associations.
2. A record of all donors collected will be maintained showing
  - a. Registered name and registration number of the female from which embryos were recovered;
  - b. Date of recovery;
  - c. Registered name and registration number of each male whose semen was used to inseminate the donor;
  - d. Number of transferable embryos recovered, including stage and grade as established by the International Embryo Transfer Society (IETS) and adopted by the AETA;
  - e. Identification of recipients to which embryos were transferred as per Section D-8; and
  - f. Record of embryo treatment and manipulation.
3. A record of all embryos frozen must be maintained in a form as required by the AETA and breed associations.
  - a. Frozen embryos will be labeled and graded in keeping with the standardized procedure established by the IETS and adopted by the AETA.

- b. An inventory of frozen embryos in storage will be maintained.
  - c. A record of all divided embryos will be maintained in such a manner that animals that result from divided embryos can be identified on applications for their respective registration.
  - d. Disposition of all embryos recovered will be documented.
4. Records of insemination, embryo recovery, processing, distribution, transfers, and inventories shall be maintained for a period of at least six years.
  5. Donors will be identified in records with their complete registered name and number. Embryos will not be collected until such time as positive identification of the donor dam has been established.
  6. Recipient identification forms or embryo certification forms will be provided as required by the AETA and breed association.
  7. ETBs purchasing and selling embryos shall maintain complete records of embryo transactions so that all embryos are identified as set forth by the AETA. The record of all sales of embryos will show the name and address of the purchaser and the date of sale.
  8. A record of the permanent identification of recipients with the identity of the embryo transferred will be made at the time of transfer.
    - a. Breed will be shown and USDA standard breed codes will be used when appropriate.
    - b. If not registered, such recipient will be uniquely identified by using two or more of the following methods of identification: (1) the number of the USDA uniform series ear tag; (2) the number of a visible plastic tag with a number that is unique to the recipients identified by the respective ETB or unique to the herd in which located but with limited exception for recipients from the herd of the owner of the donor located on the owner's premises; (3) tattoo; or (4) brand.
  9. ETBs maintaining recipient herds will identify recipients at the time acquired according to paragraph 8 and will maintain records to show
    - a. The date each animal was acquired;
    - b. The name and address of the person or firm from whom it was acquired;
    - c. The official health record, including the brucellosis calf hood vaccination certificate, tag, or tattoo, if available;
    - d. Record of health testing, vaccination, and parasite control while the animal was in the possession of the ETB; and
    - e. The date of each embryo transfer and the date removed from the premises, with the name and address of the person or firm receiving said recipient, with the record showing the identity of the embryo.
  10. Certified ETBs shall, upon the reasonable request of the CAO, make their nonfinancial records available upon inspection by the CAO.
  11. ETBs shall make pertinent records available to a breed registry organization that has encountered a problem in connection with the identification and/or parentage of an embryo or animal involving a transfer made by the ETB.

#### **E. Blood Typing**

1. The ETB should inform owners of donor dams that it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that any breed association blood typing requirements for donor dams and service sires are met. If the ETB assumes responsibility for blood typing, a registered animal must be identified with its certificate of registration at the time a blood sample is taken.

#### **F. Operating Agreement**

1. In order to become a certified ETB, an ETB must enter into an Operating Agreement

with the AETA using the form provided by the AETA.

#### **IV. CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

##### **A. The Chief Administrative Officer**

1. The certification program shall be administered by the CAO. The CAO shall be appointed by the AETA board of directors and may be a member of the AETA staff. The CAO shall not be affiliated with any ETB and shall possess qualifications sufficient to determine whether ETBs meet the requirements for AETA certification. The CAO may utilize or appoint qualified professional assistants to assist in the performance of the CAO's duties.

##### **B. Certification Applications**

1. The CAO shall be responsible for determining whether the application meets the requirements set forth in Sections II and III. If those requirements are met, the application shall be approved by the CAO. The CAO may request from any applicant documentary evidence sufficient to establish entitlement to certification. Certification applications shall be either approved or denied within 45 days of receipt by the CAO. The CAO's response to an application shall be in writing and shall be mailed to the applicant. Denials, setting forth the reason or reasons for denial, shall be mailed by certified mail. The appeal procedures set forth in Section IV, Part E, shall apply to denials of certification applications. The CAO shall maintain permanently all records relating to certification applications.

##### **C. Certification Renewals**

1. Once an ETB is certified, the certification shall continue until such time as the Operating Agreement with the AETA is terminated or expired. An Operating Agreement must be renewed on an annual basis by submission, effective December 31 of each year, on a Certification Renewal Application accompanied by the stated annual renewal fee. An ETB whose certification has lapsed must reapply for certification. (See Section III Requirements for Certification, Part B, for renewal procedures.)

##### **D. Inspection and Noncompliance**

1. The CAO may conduct an inspection of a certified ETBs facilities and/or records upon receipt of credible information suggesting that the ETB is not in compliance with the requirements for AETA certification. Following each inspection, the CAO shall forward to the ETB a written report finding either (1) that the ETB is in compliance with the requirements for AETA certification or (2) that the ETB is not in compliance with those requirements. The specific reasons for noncompliance, as well as copies of all documents evidencing such noncompliance, shall be included in the written report. Reports concluding that the ETB is not in compliance shall be mailed to the ETB by certified mail and shall include a finding either (1) that the ETB shall be given 30 days within which to correct the deficiency or (2) that the ETBs Operating Agreement shall be terminated, absent an appeal, 30 days after receipt of the written report by the ETB. The CAO shall give the ETB an opportunity to correct the deficiency prior to finding that termination of the Operating Agreement is required if, in the opinion of the CAO, the deficiency is minor, inadvertent, or correctable. ETBs whose Operating Agreements have been terminated for cause may reapply for AETA certification, but no certification will be granted without a prior inspection of the ETB's facilities and records by the CAO.

##### **E. Appeal Procedure**

1. An ETB may appeal a denial of its certification application or a CAO finding that its

Operating Agreement should be terminated by filing with the CAO, within 30 days of receipt of the CAO decision, a Notice of Appeal in the form attached hereto. A Notice of Appeal will not be deemed "filed" until a fully completed form, including the ETB's mailing address, is actually received at the AETA offices. The appeal will be heard by the AETA board of directors. A certified ETB's Operating Agreement shall not be terminated while an appeal is pending. Upon receipt of the Notice of Appeal, the CAO shall transmit to the board of directors copies of the Notice of Appeal, his complete written report, and all evidence upon which his decision was based. The board of directors shall hold a hearing within 90 days of receipt of the Notice of Appeal. The board of directors shall give the appealing party at least 30 days written notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing. At the hearing, the appealing party may be represented by counsel and shall be permitted to offer evidence and to cross-examine opposing witnesses. A majority of the board of directors must be present in order for the hearing to go forward. Counsel for the AETA shall be present at any such hearing. The sole official record of all appeal hearings shall be that produced in a manner approved by the board of directors. Copies of the record shall be made available to any interested person upon the payment, in advance, of the reasonable costs thereof. At the close of the hearing, those members of the board of directors who are present shall meet in executive session to decide the appeal by applying the facts to the stated requirements for AETA certification. The board decision either to affirm or to reverse the CAO must be made by a majority of those board members present. A written board decision, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, shall be filed with the CAO within 15 days of the hearing. The CAO shall within 10 days of the receipt of the board decision mail a copy thereof to the ETB. If the board affirms a CAO finding either that a certification application was properly denied or that a certified ETB's Operating Agreement should be terminated, (1) the CAO mailing to the ETB shall be by certified mail and (2) a termination shall become effective 10 days after the ETB's receipt of the decision. Should the board reverse the CAO's decision, the board decision shall have immediate effect. ETB's appealing CAO decisions to the board of directors shall be required to pay an appeal fee. All fee amounts are subject to change by the AETA board of directors. Each party shall bear its own costs in any appeal proceeding.

## **V. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- A. The AETA certification program is a voluntary program open to any ETB. Membership in the AETA is not a prerequisite to participation in the certification program.
- B. An ETB shall be required to pay an examination fee for the practitioner taking the AETA competency examination. ETBs may apply for certification on the basis of their employment of a practitioner who has already passed the competency examination as a representative of another ETB.
- C. Certification depends upon the employment of the person who has passed the competency examination. A qualified individual who has passed the certification competency examination may represent only one certified ETB, except for Section V General Provisions, Part D, which is for interim purposes only.
- D. An ETB no longer employing a practitioner who has passed the competency exam for that company may retain a provisional certification status by the employment of another practitioner who has already passed the competency test for another ETB. The ETB will be given until the next regularly scheduled exam to have one of its qualified employees pass the exam or the ETB shall lose its AETA certification status.